Understanding the Yowie Phenomenon

Indigenous legends and eyewitness reports suggest that two types of bipedal primates, the larger Yowie and the smaller Junjadee, inhabit densely forested country in Australia.

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PO Box 380 Mullumbimby NSW 2482, Australia Telephone/Fax: +61 (0)2 6684 3554 E-mail: profgopit@yowiehunters.com have a regular talkback radio program on 2NR regional ABC in northeastern New South Wales, where I talk about the seasonal behaviour of local wildlife and identify fauna species for listeners from their descriptions of physical features or calls. On 11 February 1997, I received a call from John Morrison of Coffs Harbour, which made the local news service.

On 15 January 1997, whilst on a family picnic between Station Creek and Dundurrabin in the Guy Fawkes National Park, Morrison's daughter found a trail of footprints. Each print was 60 centimetres long. He described them as something similar to a human footprint, with obvious left and right prints, 1 to 1.5 metres apart. The big toe was distinct from a group of other toes that impressed together so they couldn't really be counted. The heel made the deepest depression: about two centimetres.

The prints were in a dry creek-bed in sandy alluvial soil covered with some scattered shrubs. John and his family followed the prints for about a kilometre up a long, narrow gully until it reached a rocky outcrop. There were no fallen leaves or other debris within the prints, so they were fresh. It appeared to the family that a large, heavy, bipedal animal had recently walked up the gully. John had heard stories about an unknown animal called a Yowie, and wanted to know if the creature was generally regarded as real, because, until then, he was under the impression that they were just fanciful stories.

I told John and the listeners that I had never really believed in the reports in newspapers about giant furry bipedal primates lurking within our bushland, until I was fortunate enough to hear at close quarters three different sets of calls that proved to me that there really was something unknown out there. I gave forth with approximations of the calls that I had heard, and I would imagine that those calls were the first Yowie territorial calls ever uttered over the airways.

In 1973–74, I was studying the fauna of the Papua New Guinean rainforest with biologists at the Wau Ecology Institute, a field station of the Bishop Museum of Hawaii. Over a one-year period I recorded fauna species (primarily birds) and their behaviour with an ornithologist on the slopes of Mount Missim in undisturbed *Castanopsis* oak rainforest at Poverty Creek at an elevation of 1,500 metres.

On 6, 14 and 19 December 1973 and on 16 and 25 October 1974, during daylight hours, we heard very loud and powerful mammal calls consisting of a series of deep, base notes, repeated without variation over a period of five seconds, that produced a bellowing roar clearly audible through the rainforest from perhaps a kilometre away. At one instance I was standing on a rock outcrop above the trees and clearly heard the calls emanating from a forest valley approximately two kilometres below me. We had particularly specialised in the identification of fauna from their calls, so were surprised to hear powerful calls that sounded to my ears as primate-like.

Having spent some time listening to the vocalising of chimpanzees, gibbon and other primates at Taronga Zoological Gardens in Sydney, I was forced to the conclusion that I was listening to the calls of a very large and powerful primate. As Papua New Guinea has an Australian faunal assemblage with no primates, I found it hard to believe that such a creature as I was hearing could exist.

On 25 November 1973 at Vickery Creek, Mount Missim, at 1,200 metres elevation, whilst walking along an old logging track towards a bird hide in which an ecologist was observing nesting superb fruit dove, I observed a dark, bipedal figure crossing the track 200 metres in front of me. I took it to be a native Melanesian, but was surprised to see no sign of clothing at this high altitude and no weapons, and that, unusually, the figure did

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not walk or even glance along the track but instead moved through dense vegetation while travelling down the slope. The ecologist had not observed the figure, even though it was moving towards the hide.

It was a great mystery to me as to the identification of a humanlike figure, swinging its arms and paying no attention to the track that it was crossing, especially as we never encountered anyone else. Even after hearing the subsequent calls, it did not occur to me at the time that the figure I had observed may have been responsible for the calls. I had read newspaper articles of Yetis and Bigfoot in the northern hemisphere, but had never heard of unknown primate bipeds in this part of the world.

It was not until I returned to Australia that I first read about Yowies, and I was particularly interested in a close encounter in early 1978 in Springbrook, southeastern Queensland, by a National Parks and Wildlife Services ranger. The witness was a work colleague of a naturalist friend of mine who was able to relate to me a detailed description.

A bipedal, gorilla-like primate, standing 2.5 metres high, with a distinctive odour, a grunting voice, a body covered in long black hair, a flat and shiny black face, large yellow eyes, a sagittal crest,

and huge hand, was clearly observed in Antarctic beech rainforest at 2 pm in good light from a distance of four metres. Several other previous sightings on the same mountain and in surrounding districts were reported in local newspapers.

I found these reports extremely difficult to believe because I had spent years studying the flora and fauna in the forests of southeast Queensland, I had read widely on historical and natural history subjects, and had neither suspected nor found any trace that would lead me to conclude that such a remarkable animal could be inhabiting the district. Even more difficult

to explain was the fact that an unknown primate was definitely not an expected member of the Australian faunal assemblage. A deep channel of open ocean, known as the Wallace Line, has always divided the fauna of Southeast Asia and Australia. This explains why Asian monkeys, apes, squirrels, cats, deers, rhinos and elephants, to name just a few, were never able to cross over to this continent. Only humans and their pet dingoes in water craft were successful in undertaking such a hazardous journey.

Then, on 21 June 1978 at 3 am, on a very quiet night with a full moon, I was awakened by a very powerful, continuously repeated roaring, bellowing call emanating from lowland subtropical rainforest in Joalah National Park on Tamborine Mountain, 300 metres from our house, at an altitude of 500 metres. The call was similar to those that I'd heard in Papua New Guinea, though the animal was much closer and the call was therefore even more powerful. It was a deep-throated, booming "yee-yee-yee-yee" that continued without a break for five minutes, and so was much longer than the calls that I had heard in Papua New Guinea. I could clearly hear the calls being pumped out of a massive chest, and they sounded more like the call of a big primate than anything else. It was much more powerful than the roaring-grunting of a koala or even the bellowing of cattle.

After approximately two minutes, three dingoes broke into their characteristic howling, as they regularly did whenever the noctur-

nal silence was broken by the occasional backfire of a car travelling down the mountainside, a tree falling in the rainforest or the mail plane travelling overhead. Two of the dingoes were approximately 80 metres to one side of the mysterious animal and the third was howling at a similar distance on the opposite side. The sound of these four animals in full cry was the most remarkable natural sound I have ever heard. Even more important, though, was that I was able to judge accurately the call of the unknown animal over the calls of the dingoes that I regularly heard.

The call of the Yowie—if that's what it was, for I could equally refer to it as a Bunyip—was at least twice as loud and much more powerful than the dingoes', and after their howling finished the Yowie continued its repetitive bellowing for perhaps another minute. Then only the sound of Curtis Falls, Cedar Creek and the chirping of the crickets remained.

That experience proved to me that there was indeed a very large and powerful animal dwelling in the locality—no matter how implausible it seemed. It also provided an answer to a couple of the mysteries that I had pondered for some time.

The first was a local mystery surrounding an unknown carnivore that was preying on rednecked pademelons (small wallabies) that had always been common on the mountain, where they fed on

lawns adjacent to rainforest. Our neighbour at the time, Frank Field, is a retired jackeroo, drover, tracker, naturalist and farmer. On several occasions in 1976 he had encountered kill sites on an adjacent property where pademelons had been attacked. He would find traces of fur and scuff marks on the ground and then several metres away the entrails of the wallaby, torn from the body and left on the grass and leaf litter. The intestines would trail back towards the forest, as if the animal had been gutted while being carried away.

"It definitely wasn't a dingo, which I spent years hunting when on the

land. It was as if the predator had simply lifted the wallaby off the ground each time, and carried its prey instead of dragging it off and leaving traces on the ground as a dingo always does. I have no idea what animal would be powerful enough to carry a wallaby away and rip its intestines out as it went," he told me.

Having spent years searching for physical traces of wildlife behaviour so as to identify what species were in a locality, I knew that an unknown herbivore would have left traces of vegetation disturbance while feeding, and large, distinctive faeces. However, if the Yowie were a nocturnal carnivore that remained hidden during the day and carried larger prey items to secluded locations where it would feed and defecate, it would be unlikely for evidence of its activities to be noticed.

The second mystery occurred in 1971 when I was working as a National Parks ranger at Green Mountains in Lamington National Park. One Saturday night, the officer at the ranger's office and residence was startled to hear a series of heavy thumps on the outside wall. When he got to a window and yelled out to whoever was outside to identify themselves, another noisy commotion began beneath the house. He was amazed to see large numbers of heavy working tools, shovels, hoes, rakes, axes and brush-hooks, used in the maintenance of the walking tracks and stored under the house, flung with great force onto the back lawn. The sound of heavy grunts amongst the crash of tools terrified him and,

I could clearly hear the calls being pumped out of a massive chest, and they sounded more like the call of a big primate than anything else. believing that a madman was attacking the cabin, he ran for his life up to O'Reilly's Guest House for help.

Campers also arrived at the guest house, informing the staff of the terrible noises coming from the ranger's cabin, and so a group walked back to see what was going on. No one had seen people or vehicles near the house, so rampaging louts were discounted, and, although dozens of tools now lay on the grass in the dark, no sign of the madman was found and no explanation for the incident could be determined.

I arrived on the Sunday night to hear about the incident, and the next morning we picked up all the tools and stored them away as before. Then I walked into the rainforest immediately below the backyard and was surprised to find that our enormous woodstack had also been attacked. Approximately 7 metres in length, 1.5 metres wide and 2 metres high, and composed of very heavy pieces of timber held in place by strong timber stakes that had been sledgehammered into the ground, it now lay completely scattered and most of the stakes had been pulled out of the ground.

It took us the rest of the day to rebuild the woodstack, and we had absolutely no idea what was responsible for its dismantling. No human had the power to move so much timber. The regrowth of the rainforest above and surrounding it was undisturbed, the weather had been fine, and we knew of no life-form that could perform such a task. But the call and the reports of a powerful nocturnal primate at large in the locality now provided an answer: the ranger's cabin had been attacked by a Yowie.

Yowie sightings have since been recorded occasionally throughout the locality but, for my own part, years of bushwalking and flora and fauna surveys have yielded not the slightest trace of their existence.

Another Tamborine resident, Larry Edwards, heard similar calls from Guanaba Gorge just after dark on 7 September 1992. They reminded him of the loud, resonating, shrill, roaring calls that he regularly heard as a youngster at Blunder Creek, southwest of Brisbane, between 1961 and 1972. His family always heard the calls at the beginning of spring each year, at about 9 pm on full-moon nights. The call would last for about two minutes, increasing in volume as the animal ran down a dry creek-bed in the gully

below the house, with the sound of its feet making huge, leaping steps; then the call would decrease in volume as the creature continued on its way.

He told me that the man who was in charge of the nearby Blunder Repeater Station taperecorded the calls and made plaster casts of the footprints which were three metres apart when it was running. The prints were humanlike but 30 cm long and 10 cm wide, with circular clawmarks 5 mm wide that were 4 cm deep into the soil. With the commencement of suburban development in the area, the calls were no longer heard.

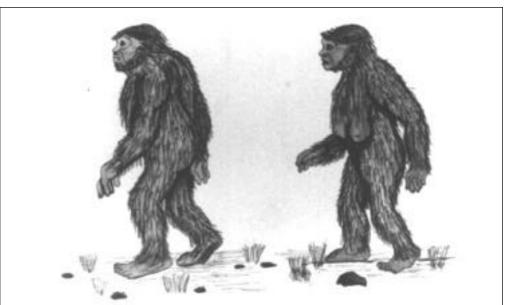
The first person I ever talked to who had actually observed a Yowie was a Victorian Government surveyor. John Macey and workmate Sid

Griffith were surveying a road in bushland at Murderer's Hill, near Walballa in Gippsland, Victoria, one misty day in September 1979 when at 11 am they saw, five metres away, an ape-like animal, 1.2 metres high, standing on its hind legs with its back to them. They noticed that it was a powerful animal with wide hips and buttocks that were visible as it threw its long arms over a 1.3-metre-high fallen log and then clambered over to disappear into thick vegetation. They noticed a patch of pale skin on the back of the neck beneath the black hair that covered all of its body. It did not appear to be a chimpanzee, gorilla or orang-utan, which they had seen in zoos, but was definitely another species of ape that had no tail.

Then, at 3.30 am on 1 June 1996, in bushland behind a house that we were renting on the slopes of the Koonyum Range at Main Arm in northeastern NSW, I was again fortunate enough to hear the calls of this undescribed animal. There was a full moon illuminating a crystal-clear night and there was no air movement—so sounds, such as a rooster crowing, could be heard for some kilometres. Approximately 200 metres away, near a dry creek-bed in eucalypt forest at 200 metres elevation, a series of some 90 loud, bark-like calls rent the air.

The calls were mostly in a series of three, making a sound like "arroo-ARROO-arroo". The first was a start-up call, which was not as loud as the middle call, which was climactic and was followed by a softer call. The beginning of each of the three barks, "arr", was sudden and intense, while the final "oo" portion was cut short as it fell off in volume. Between the sets of three barks, at a time of about five or six seconds, a disturbingly strange, soft, gurgling call, "gu-gu-gu-gu", could be heard. It continued with very little variation for about five minutes, with the last couple of series of calls appearing less loud, as if the creature had begun to move off. They were quite unlike the calls of foxes or barking deer that I had heard in Southeast Asia and, once again, had more of a primate feel to them.

The next day I found three toeprints in an earth creek-bank where the creature had climbed up the slope. Each toe was about the same size as a human big toe, but each slightly smaller in size towards the right, as if from a right foot. Nearby, on a ridgetop



Depiction of male and female Yowies, based upon ancient Aboriginal as well as modern-day European eyewitness descriptions.

Sketch by Rex Gilroy, from his book *Mysterious Australia* (1995, NEXUS Publishing).

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covered in dry eucalypt forest, five square metres of native grass had been disturbed, in that each clump of grass had been pulled up with the roots and then placed back exactly where it had grown. Two weeks later, a distinctive brown patch of dead grass was evident.

The calls of this animal were similar in some respects to the call of the first animal I'd heard in 1978, in that they were a series of unvarying or repeated calls which were quite powerful and occurred continuously for about five minutes. The first call, though, was even more powerful, with a very bass note as if uttered by a very large animal. This second call was higher-pitched and sounded as if it came from a smaller animal. Strangely enough, this accorded with the sighting of an unusual animal some months before by some friends.

yn Clark and her 12-year-old son Joshua were on their way to our house in the late afternoon to attend the birthday party of one of our daughters on 23 March 1996. Because they were concerned that their old car might not be able to climb the steep, kilometre-long hill up to the house, they decided to walk up the driveway.

Joshua was in front, and halfway up he was surprised to see what appeared to be one of the children from the party, dressed in

dark clothing and running headlong down the steep slope. He was amazed that a child could run downhill at such a pace, and found it even more remarkable that the child was not running down the concrete driveway but was running down a slope thickly covered in large clumps of kangaroo grass, grass-trees and scattered shrubs beneath a eucalypt canopy. He was sure it was a child because of its posture—it was bent slightly forward, as is normal for a person running down a hill—and he expected to see the child trip and fall at any moment. But the child ran down towards him without any difficulty until it saw him and then turned and stopped about 30 metres away.

Afterwards, Lyn described to me what she had observed: a dark-furred animal with a round head and no tail, running on two legs like a person. I was naturally extremely sceptical ...

Joshua was even more surprised now because, although it was shaped very like a child and was 1.25 metres tall, about the same height as a 10-to-12-year-old, it was covered in thick, black hair with only its dark face visible. Joshua rushed back to get his mother and pointed the creature out to her, as it was still standing in the same position.

Lyn found it difficult to see because the creature was very well camouflaged until it began to move. From a bipedal position, it dropped down to move off slowly downhill, knuckle-walking as a quadruped. Then, as it gathered speed, it stood erect and ran off down the hill.

Afterwards, Lyn described to me what she had observed: a dark-furred animal with a round head and no tail, running on two legs like a person. I was naturally extremely sceptical, as I had seen nothing unusual in my explorations of the area, and told her that it could only have been a swamp wallaby, often seen on the slope—though she insisted that it didn't hop but ran on two legs.

It wasn't until I heard the unexpected calls at close range that I was able to believe that Lyn and Joshua had seen a very remarkable animal.

The calls that I heard can be used to provide a provisional identity for these unknown animals. The calls were typical of a territorial call, being loud, powerful and repetitive, and uttered on quiet, windless nights so that the calls were far-carrying and could reach the ears of other territory-holding adults.

The small bipedal primate observed and heard in 1996 is unlikely to be an immature or halfgrown specimen of the much larger bipedal primate observed and heard in 1978. This is because immature animals do not hold territories or give territorial calls. If they did, it would be an immediate invitation for a fully grown animal to locate the brash young usurper and drive it off.

Because both territorial calls were similar in their make-up (a series of loud, repetitive calls) and were made under similar conditions (still, moonlit nights in June), it can be inferred that both animals are closely related. This also agrees with sightings descriptions of unknown bipedal primates. However, it can also be inferred from both territorial calls that two different species are involved.

The 1978 call was a continuous series of extremely powerful, bellowing roars, as would be expected from a large bipedal primate, 2.5 metres tall and inhabiting the rainforest. The 1996 call was a continuous series of powerful, high-pitched barks in series

of three, with a softer gurgling call

included. These latter calls were associated with the sighting of a small bipedal primate, 1.25 metres tall, inhabiting mountainous, dry sclerophyll forest.

It is a common occurrence within closely related animal species inhabiting a similar ecological niche and utilising a similar food resource that a major size difference evolves so that one species is half the size and weight of the other, so as to reduce competition amongst them. This is perfectly shown in the observed size difference in these two undescribed bipedal primates. Different territorial calls also evolve in closely related species and fur-

ther reduce competition between them.

Both species were known to the Aboriginal people and European settlers, particularly those working in the bush. Aboriginal people throughout eastern NSW knew the larger species as Doolagarl, Doolagard, Gooligah, Thoolagal, Moomega and Yaromah, depending on their language group. Aboriginal people—from Sydney, inland to the Blue Mountains and Bathurst, and down to Batemans Bay and Bega—appear to have used the word Yowie, or Yourie, for ghosts and evil spirits. This name, along with the name Yahoo, then appears to have been applied to the large bipedal primate by early European settlers. After the settlers arrived, both the terms Yowie and Yahoo were also used by Aboriginal people, though Europeans also used the terms Hairy Man and Australian gorilla. However, Yowie has become the accepted name in recent years.

Cryptozoologists researching reports of similar large bipedal primates (usually known as Wild Men) across Africa, Eurasia, Southeast Asia and the Americas agree that the animal appears to be *Gigantopithecus*, known only from half-a-million-year-old fossils from China. Descriptions of the physical appearance and behaviour of the Yeti of the Himalayas, the Yeren of China, the

Sasquatch or Bigfoot of North America, and Doolagarl or the Yowie of Australia are all so similar that it would appear they are all members of the same species, or are at least closely related.² All appear to be extremely cryptic, solitary, nocturnal hunters that have adapted to a wide range of different habitats, have naturally low population numbers and very large territories, as is typical of many large carnivorous mammal species. Competition with another similar-sized bipedal hunting primate (humans) may have been partly responsible for humans existing in large, diurnal, social populations, and *Gigantopithecus* existing as scattered, solitary, nocturnal, cryptic populations, so reducing competition.

The small bipedal primate was known to the Aboriginal people as Junjadee, Junjuddis, Dinderi, Winambuu, Waaki and Nimbunj, depending on their language group, and as Brown Jacks since European settlement. This smaller species made newspaper headlines in March 1979 when individuals were observed on Tower Hill at Charters Towers in Queensland. There have been many reports of small bipedal primates from Africa, Asia and Sumatra, where they are known as *Orang Pendek*.³

So how did these originally Asian animals get to Australia? The answer is evident in the documentation of sightings of these and similar animals elsewhere.

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In Australia, the large bipedal primate has been observed swimming in rivers and lagoons, and in such situations has been called a Bunyip. Sightings of seals far upstream in freshwater rivers and billabongs, perhaps along with the last surviving aquatic megafauna, were probably responsible for most Bunyip reports.

The Aboriginal people of the lower Murray River know of an ape-like creature that swims in the river, and have named it Mooluwonk. On 18 July 1848, the *Argus* reported the sighting of a huge humanoid swimming in the Eumeralla River, Victoria. The

Melbourne *Herald* of 29 October 1849 reported the observation of a Bunyip beside a lake on Phillip Island, Victoria. It was described as being half-man and half-baboon, and it dived into the lake when it was shot at. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 24 August 1872 reported that a party of surveyors observed a Bunyip swimming at Cowal Lake, NSW. It resembled a human but was covered with long dark hair, and it rose out of the water—so they were able to see its shoulders—and then dived as if in chase of fish.⁴ A Yowie was observed wading ashore from Lake Dulverton in Tasmania in 1987; Sasquatch have been observed wading in Lake Winnipegosis and the Klamath River in North America.⁵

These reports show that the Yowie is an excellent swimmer in small bodies of water. Investigations by Bob Titmus, one of the very early Bigfoot investigators who operated from a boat among the islands and inlets of British Columbia over several years, proved that the Sasquatch was capable of swimming through stormy seas. Fresh sets of tracks coming out of the water and into the woods on small islands show that the Yowie is perfectly capable of swimming across open seas to reach distant hunting grounds or to colonise new territory. Yowies therefore appear to have entered the Australasian region from Asia by swimming from island to island.

Accidental rafting could also explain this Asian animal's pres-

ence in Australia. It is believed that Asian mice reached Australian shores in this way over millions of years and, once on land, diversified into endemic species. Larger mammals would have enormous difficulties surviving such a voyage, adapting to the new environment and arriving in large enough numbers to begin a genetically diverse population. However, an adaptable, semi-aquatic, carnivorous primate—humans—made the journey, so perhaps a similar, though fur-covered, species could do likewise. Before human domination of Southeast Asia, the islands were thickly vegetated and richly populated with a diverse fauna. Riverside rainforest torn loose near a river-mouth during cyclonic weather to form rafts of trees that floated to Australia with a complement of animals preyed upon by a family of Yowie castaways, could just be possible.

any researchers of undescribed cryptic animals are not biologists, and they often conclude that these animals must be paranormal because they are so elusive and impossible to capture. They state that the existence of the animal can only be understood by looking for explanations beyond the understanding of modern physics. These statements are absolutely preposterous and show little understanding of physics, biology,

ecology or animal behaviour. It is

most unlikely that the entire understanding of physical reality falls apart whenever an undescribed animal is reported. It is also unlikely that the only evidence of other dimensions intruding into our own is represented by a cryptic animal and by no other aspect of natural phenomena.

It is to be expected that the general public would have little knowledge of, or belief in, undescribed fauna. Most people's experience with wildlife comes from museums, zoos and the picnic areas of national parks, so it is only natural that they would believe that if an animal has

not been regularly observed then it could not possibly exist.

Field biologists, however, know from years of experience that it is incredibly difficult to observe, trap, photograph or obtain any evidence for the existence of many species—at least until they come up with an innovative method to do so. This particularly applies to solitary nocturnal carnivores.

The Eastern puma or mountain lion (*Puma [Felis] concolor couguar*), which ranged from New Brunswick in Canada to the Carolinas in the USA, has been considered extinct by all American state wildlife agencies and the US Fish & Wildlife Service for most of the 20th century. Despite numerous fauna surveys, no evidence for its existence had been found in almost 100 years, and yet dozens of eyewitness reports are made in almost all eastern states every year.

A Canadian wildlife biologist, Bruce Wright, director of the Northeastern Wildlife Station of the University of New Brunswick, was convinced from sightings reports from the late 1930s that the Eastern puma had survived in cryptic, remnant populations, but he was never able to convince his fellow zoologists or provincial officials. After over 50 years of investigations of Eastern puma sightings by biologists, fresh tracks in snow and

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faecal scat were found. Analysis of the droppings revealed the remains of consumed prey (snowshoe hare) and indisputable Eastern puma hairs from the feet and legs, presumably ingested while grooming after feeding. On 1 March 1993, the New Brunswick Minister of Natural Resources officially acknowledged the presence of an Eastern puma population.⁸

The Eastern puma is still regarded as extinct in the USA, despite the eyewitness reports and its official rediscovery in Canada. It is now understood to have survived all of that time that it was thought to be definitely extinct, even though not a photograph or specimen has been obtained as evidence. Unlike what some researchers thought, the sightings did not represent an entity from another dimension, but an ordinary animal that could easily survive and reproduce without revealing any evidence of its existence.

If a carnivorous animal is hunted into apparent extinction, what is probably exterminated are all those members of the population that have been the most successful competitors for territory and therefore hold the prime habitats, are more self-assured and are more obvious to human hunters. The survivors are probably those that have always been forced to live in the poorest habitats and, through competition with more dominant individuals, have been forced to become cryptic. When humans clear the prime habitat of the species, the cryptic individuals survive in remnant habitat and pass on their genes for cryptic behaviour to their offspring.

If the Eastern puma can survive as an almost invisible entity in such a heavily populated area as the eastern part of North America, how much easier is it for our own cryptic species, such as the often-reported mainland thylacine (the Tasmanian tiger), supposed feral pumas and panthers, and the Yowie and Junjadee? When biologists point out that thylacines were easily trapped and hunted in the early part of the 20th century and so could not possibly have changed their behaviour to become cryptic, it is possible that the cryptic members of the population always avoided the hunters and continue to do so now.

With the increasing technological advantage that we humans possess, it may eventually be proved that we were extremely arrogant, and that cryptic species—which we swore could not possibly exist without our knowing all about them—have been observing us all along.

Endnotes

- 1. Healy, T. and Cropper, P., *Out of the Shadows: Mystery Animals of Australia*, Ironbark/Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, 1994. 2. Ibid.
- 3. Ibid.
- 4. Ibid.
- 5. Ibid.
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- 8. The ISC Newsletter, ibid.

About the Author:

Gary Opit is an environmental consultant with a 25-year career in field research and public relations in Australia, Papua New Guinea and Southeast Asia. His skills and expertise include vegetation and fauna surveying and mapping techniques, plant conservation biology and wildlife habitat management. He lectures to university and high school students in botany, zoology, biogeography, Australian and Aboriginal ecology, and Aboriginal religion and culture. He has a fortnightly talkback radio program on regional ABC Radio 2NR (94.5 FM, 720 AM) on Tuesdays at 10.30 am.

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